



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB. 6588 WITH AMENDMENTS

Dave John Cruz-Bustamante

To the Connecticut Housing Committee

18 February 2023

My name is Dave John Cruz-Bustamante. I live in New Haven, Connecticut and I work as a political educator with the Connecticut Democratic Socialists of America and I serve as a student representative on the New Haven Board of Education. I support HB. 6588 with amendments. Members of the housing committee, please give me your full, un-divided attention. Listen to me; listen to all of us with the purpose of understanding us. Don't listen to think of your response.

3 minutes is not nearly enough time to completely paint the portrait of grief and preserving love felt in my corner of New Haven in this story. The corner that held the rolling grass of Rice Field, the rusty squeaks of the swingsets, sunsets, the echoing laughter of careless childhood, the warm embrace of community and commonality.

Until it was ripped away from me.

Ripped away from me like a wailing baby being dragged away from its mother. All because the rent got too high. We moved. We moved into the second floor of a tenement house where the roof caved in a little more every time it rained and where we shared the floor with another family of 3.

Thousands and thousands of workers, young people, and community members suffer from the systemic affliction of restless greed and disempowerment. Make no mistake, you will hear dozens and dozens of landlords claim that this bill is detrimental to the lives of landlords. But the majority of these wrong-doings, the monopolies held over our communities, and the affliction of greed are done by

multi-million dollar companies and out-of-town landlords who have no stake in our towns and cities; who see our lives and land as commodities to be altered, bought, and sold— not places to sleep, play, and work in. Don't buy into the myth of the small landlord. Ask yourselves who you serve— do you really want to buy into the stereotype of Connecticut, do you want to use your power to protect capital, the deep pockets of the few— or protect the lives of the many? Legislators of the Connecticut Housing Committee, you have the power to right these wrongs. My childhood may remain scarred, but you have the opportunity to correct the course of justice. Will it be justice to the workers, the youth, tenants, and the people that make Connecticut run, or *just-more* to big landlords and corporations who have no stake in the community? Keep the twinkling eyes of the youth in your head as you make this decision— and make the right one— let them keep their twinkle, and nurture their stability— *you* have the ultimate authority over this.

We need a 2% rent cap and good-cause eviction protections. Close the loopholes and ensure that *all* buildings are covered, regardless of when they were built, in addition to ensuring that the rent cap is enforced between tenants. Connecticut can be the first among many. Will you take the first step? I know we will. Whatever you may decide, the masses of workers and people are going to make this happen.

Thank you.